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SUBJECT: GDRC receives surrender July 31 of RUD soldiers

¶1. (SBU) The recent surrender of 67 Rassemblement pour l'Unité et la Démocratie (RUD) soldiers in a public ceremony in North Kivu on July 31 was a small but potentially significant victory for DDRR. The ceremony took place in the vicinity of Luofu in Lubero district.

In attendance were the DRC Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Ministers of Interior and Defense. Invited guests included the Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) Task Force and a large press corps.

Rwanda was represented through its JMG members. A high level invitation had been sent to Kigali by the DRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but no senior Rwandan officials accepted it. U.S. members of the Task Force attended as part of the JMG delegation.

¶2. (SBU) Among those who gave speeches were RUD commander General Musare and Executive Secretary Felicien Kanyamubwa, who had been flown to Congo from New Jersey at the GDRC's expense. Musare and Kanyamubwa did not hesitate to criticize Rwandan President Paul Kagame for the plight of RUD soldiers who, they said, had been falsely accused of being killers and rapists. They called on Kagame to give safety guarantees to RUD fighters and to open an inter-Rwandan dialogue, all old demands. According to the speakers, the ball was now in Rwanda's court. The Congolese Foreign Minister, Antipas Mbusa, gave the final speech, clearly enjoying himself in front of about 15 journalists and some 500 villagers. He used the opportunity to praise the DRC's willingness to work in partnership with Rwanda and to point to President Kabila's deep concern for the Kivus. He told the combatants that they would be given certain options, but that returning to Rwanda was the best solution. (Note: This is clearly the main objective of the DDRR program, but the Rwandans present after the ceremony expressed concern that the combatants remaining in the DRC would simply move somewhere nearby, meaning they could regroup later.)

¶3. (SBU) Though MONUC's DDRR office was involved from the beginning in the RUD-GDRC negotiations that started on January 24, 2008, the final financial breakthrough to make the event happen came from a private Congolese businessman with ties to the Foreign Minister. In one month he had organized the construction of the demobilization camp - including separate quarters for single and married soldiers as well as the bleachers for the ceremony. DDRR was to start sensitizing the ex-combatants right away on the options available to them, but it was not clear how long the GDRC would be able to support the camp. Any delay could result in the ex-combatants abandoning the camp to pursue economic interests elsewhere. Meanwhile, 42 weapons were collected, of which 2 were crew-served machine guns. These were given to MONUC for destruction. (Note: No more than half of the weapons appeared to be in functioning condition. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Although the number of RUD members laying down arms was small, the event was a symbolic victory for the GDRC, which has made an effort to entice Rwandan nationals to demobilize and repatriate under the Nairobi communiqué. Both Congolese and DDRR officials expressed hope after the ceremony that the Rwandans would look past the provocative words of the two RUD speakers and take

steps to facilitate and encourage more surrenders. The true value of the DDRRR process will not be fully known until the disarmed soldiers have started new lives in Rwanda. Only then will it become easier to convince other RUD and FDLR combatants that it is safe to lay down their weapons and go home. End comment.